

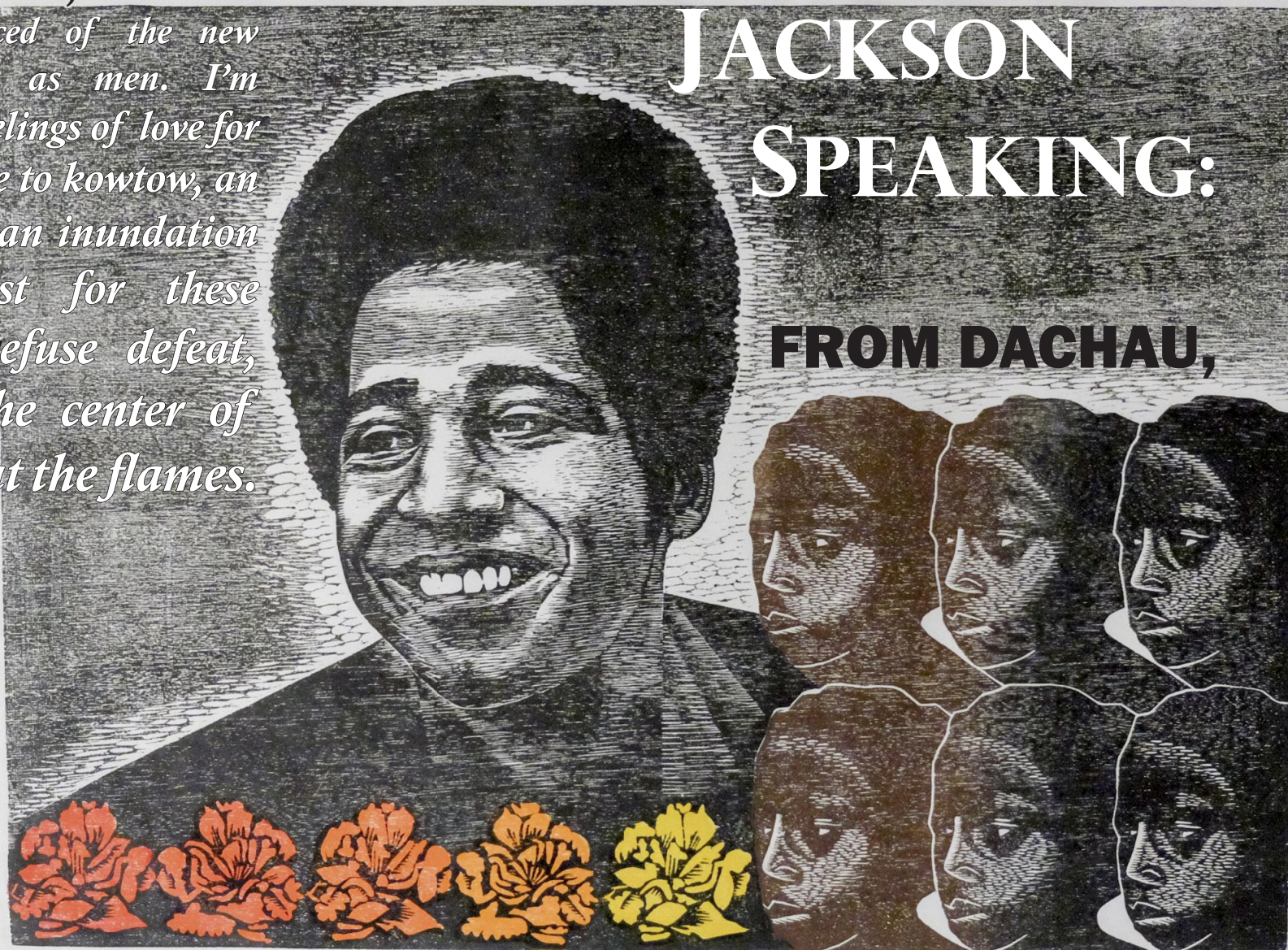
I love them. I feel for them, as the most desperate and advanced of the new revolutionary breed, as men. I'm compelled to great feelings of love for these cats who refuse to kowtow, an unrestrained love, an inundation of my damndest for these comrades who refuse defeat, who stand at the center of Hades and spit at the flames.

*We
must
support
them.*

GEORGE

JACKSON SPEAKING:

FROM DACHAU,



SOLEDAD PRISON, CALIFORNIA

it with words if you can. You've got to convince us who are doing the dying that it is justified. Sell everyone else in the world, persuade the whole damn planet, but it's *me* that you really are burdened to brainwash. I'll never see the logic behind my own murder. We're not going for it! These are the last *words*.

The National Lawyers Guild is helping us now, and has helped in legal matters surrounding our survival for thirty years. As a result, they are poor, harassed, never far from being prosecuted by the same interlocking dictatorship that persecuted us. The collusion between prison officials, D.A.'s office, judge, grand jury, city council in places like Salinas (for Soledad), San Rafael (for San Quentin), Sacramento (for Folsom) and all the Salinases around the country—the collusion between these men who work, play and fight together, belong to the same clubs, to the same schools, fought in the same political corners for years, works to rob us of almost all redress. Our lawyers have been treated like enemy agents.

It's very clear, upon reflection, what function law serves within any culture. It protects the culture's ideology. Under capitalism it protects property, the men who own it and guard it. An entity, however, never needs protection until it comes under determined attack, which, I am sure, brings into question the validity of those ideals or policies that are being attacked. So these are the last words of the last days for what could work out to be a huge section of the Amerikan population and its property. We're under attack. The next move is ours. The only way you who have read this far can help me is—learn how to *make us know* where you're at.

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Cover: “Flowers for George Jackson” by Elizabeth Cattlet, 1975

**Power to the People,
George**

prisons. Feeble-minded, broken inmates are being used to assure the people that all is well behind the wall, that we're "all" alive and well, being educated, properly fed, reasonably disciplined, civilized, processed with velvet touches. They *are* attempting to cloak their murder strategy.

The real weight of this fresh wave of terror is falling with greater emphasis upon a certain type of Black, the ones who have not lost the cat instincts, the brothers who have stepped out of their places, with talk of people's government, decentralization of privileges, a kinship with other revolutionary cultures like Cuba, Vietnam, or China. We're being locked away from the general prison population, our food is being poisoned, medical treatment is being denied (or so delayed that every serious illness means death), "setups" based on racial antipathy encouraged, even promoted, by most of the "keepers." Most of the "setups" take place under the gun. It goes like this: a convict working with the police comes in low, swinging a knife. You block and flow into a counterattack, he leaps away, falling to the ground. The keeper, whose job it is to stop fights, shoots you through the heart. Simple, justified homicide, an officer performing his duty. Weapons don't have to be involved. Another inmate could merely swing his arm at you and get out of the way—you're dead.

It has happened just like that. Three Blacks were killed with four shots by a Soledad guard January 13, 1970. The guard was supposedly stopping a fight between one white inmate and a Black Panther Party member, who had been told by a high-ranking guard the week before that he didn't have long to live! Good people, the best of our kind, they're being locked away into special units, cellblocks, wings, segregated from the general prison population and warehoused—or simply killed.

How logical it is to break up a fist fight by killing a cat! Justify

GEORGE JACKSON SPEAKING: FROM DACHAU, SOLEDAD PRISON, CALIFORNIA

This message was smuggled out on roll-your-own cigarette paper at great risk to the prison's one sympathetic guard. Its intent is to make it impossible for you to claim ignorance later on, after the war, when the world sits down to judge you, Amerikan society, Anglo-Saxon law. "We didn't know those things were going on," will not save you from the condemnation of history and the world's people.

Behind prison walls, that's where I've been for ten years now. Seven years at "the end of the world, San Quentin" (that spot on the social map where one falls over the edge, into infinity), three years of being shuttled back and forth between the other concentration centers instituted to confine the most desperate victims of the Amerikan corporate nightmare; I have spent the last year-and-a-half here in Soledad. Consequently, the seriously revolutionary groups and parties developed out of their colonial capitals in my absence. The Black Panther Party, DRUM, SDS, the Peace and Freedom Party, the facets of La Raza, the gratifying and anomalous Weathermen, the Che-Lumumba Collective were all delivered into the bowels of the beast when I (and my class) could do little more than watch and applaud. With periscope up and ear to the ground, I watched with remorse as the revolutionary infant mortality rate swelled to claim many whom I had known personally or had come to regard as kindred spirits.

We were not, however, completely disconnected from the poor

people's revolutionary stirrings. I lost nothing these ten years. There were, as always, the singular examples of revolutionary spirit from the Blacks who understood, the survivalists, men who under normal circumstances would have been to our people what Uncle Ho, Castro, The Bung, and Mao were to theirs—if we would have protected them—if we start protecting them now. Men forced into economic crimes, or crimes of passion against the forces that oppress them, should not be judged by those who have escaped similar fate merely by chance. The Eldridge Cleavers, Huey Newtons, Bobby Seales, and all the others who have resisted, survived, and by their exemplary sacrifices promoted the survival of our people; the ones who are never heard from, who live through their desperate days, years, in and out of these places of wrath and tears, Joe Cline, George "Big Jake" Louis, Bill Christmas, James B. Johnson, Nate Boothe, Clifford Jefferson, Lacy, and the thousands, the best of our whole kind, the most desperate and damned, the future of our people—these brothers are slated for immolation, they're made of unbendable Black fiber and are standing unsupported, growing unnaturally against a thing that constricts, twists, remolds all its related parts to "fit" a dominant enemy culture whose principal feature is an economics so cruel, so grinding, so omnipresent and demanding of conformity that its "misfits" are so numerous as to form an entirely new class, the new class leaders slated for immolation, large round pegs doggedly existing under pressure from above to "fit" into small square holes. The process will kill them. The square hole will be a grave.

I love them. I *feel* for them, as the most desperate and advanced of the new revolutionary breed, as men. I'm compelled to great feelings of love for these cats who refuse to kowtow, an unrestrained love, an inundation of my damndest for these comrades who refuse defeat, who stand at the center of Hades and spit at the flames. We must support them.

Because Amerika's thought control program allows for no political prisoners, the men and women who criticized the system in the language of those that call for redistribution of wealth and power, are crowded into these concentration centers in the name of the established law. Blacks have been returned to prison for "parole violations" when their only offense was perhaps selling a Black Panther newspaper or being seen at the headquarters. There are first offenders here whose only crime was being in the same city block in which a shoot-out took place. Black Panther Party members are sent to prison with one clear intention: to silence them. Since the political soldier must teach, the process has affected every Black man in prison, and further, just being seen with a Black Panther Party member will be cause enough to share in his impending ordeal.

The political presence and its concomitant reactionary violence and repression have affected our mailing privileges, our visiting privileges, access to court officials, reading material, all contact with the outside. Usually, I should say, the right to communicate is not openly abridged—our mail is simply lost or returned to sender by mistake, but usually lost. All incoming mail will be delayed if not thrown away. Visitors of unpopular inmates will be turned away or made to wait hours longer than necessary—discouraging without denying the contact. Queries regarding all this are invited, then it will be carefully explained to the would-be visitor that a comrade's behavior is so erratic or violent that special precautions were required to move him. And to some extent it will be true. We're being isolated so that the killings will go unnoticed.

All over the country the weakest of our class are being hired by local and federal governmental agencies to speak at ghetto gatherings, over the media and even in other prisons, in an effort to hide what is happening in the walled maximum security

criticism” of the kennel-like living conditions inside San Quentin’s adjustment center. The following day another group of us outside the adjustment center “physically criticized” the killing of one brother Booker, the fatality of the preceding day’s efforts. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale were introducing people’s revolutionary culture into the Black colony in the wake of the riot stage. Just across the bay (I was then in San Quentin), the terrible Black cat, product of the people’s indignation, was beginning an act that would soon transform the Black colony into a free fire zone of the occupying army and glut the prisons with a different form of economic criminal, the “political” economic offender. The myth of Amerikan acceptance of opposition party politics was once more demonstrated, a final demonstration. The Establishment’s hypocritical tolerance of a Black Panther Party, a Che-Lumumba collective, a DRUM has made the nation’s undertakers rich and concentrated so many thousands into these places of confinement, excruciation, wrath, terror, tears that we can no longer believe. We have lost the faith, all faith. Redemption to us means *death!* Ours, or the death of fascism.

We have no choice; our change is a natural, inherent response to the fact that they are now literally killing us. And no longer simply as example, but in a determined effort to be rid of us; to halt antithesis. Amerika does not seem to be unwilling to admit the existence of the fascist mentality. But we’re under attack by a determined enemy who feels that he is right, who feels threatened, challenged by our existence. They have settled on us as “the problem” with Amerikan society. Intellectual arguments that destroy the logic of violence can never overcome our atavistic urge to survive; millions of years of conditioned reflex cannot be explained away, or even washed away in so short a time. It’s too late to reform, the need is too immediate, and we have lost faith. We *will not* walk meekly to the “showers.”

Prisons, concentration camps, and similar places of exile and detention are often the starting and, almost equally often, the finishing point of the revolutionary mind. No other experience, no other social phenomenon, can equal the traumatic effect of imprisonment, the total loss of all liberty. Any further downward movement takes one out of this existence. Very few men forced into economic crimes by so impersonal a society as this one actually feel guilty enough to remain inside one of the walled prisons two days. Were it not for the gun towers, the only occupants would be the rats (four- and two-leg varieties). Because a small body of men cannot govern a larger body without either the consent of the larger body or force, making the larger body submit, the prisoner has an opportunity to see his society and some of its products at its worst. All pretenses and disguises are abandoned; the guard is there to hold you, there is no need for him to fake the idea that he is a public servant. He is there to kill you if you touch the wall or resist his heavy hand too strongly. Reducing men to dormancy and trembling is his trade. There is no other method to successfully hold a man inside an Amerikan prison. A bad contact with just one of these guards can literally kill you; his weapon may be the pen or the rifle.

This is where “misfits” learn their proper role in society, they are taught how to “fit”; in simple, graphic terms, they are shocked into an understanding of “what it’s all about.” The unrestrained brutality, the strict regimentation, all under the title of rehabilitation for return to society, the whole thing is a very strong comment on the real nature of the society in which one is expected to “fit,” on the men who control that society, direct its thinking, strangle its movement with an interlocking dictatorship that makes its presence felt at every level of that society’s existence. Here capitalist and fascist man give full range to their excesses.

Most of the men attracted to concentration camp work do not, to begin with, have a great deal of tenderness left in them. The preconceived notions regarding prison rationale in general are enough to dissuade any really healthy person from ever voluntarily signing on as a guard. Consider what types are usually drawn to gunslinger jobs. Any man who enters this work with his feelings, his sensibilities, intact must lose them or lose his job. Most prefer to keep the wage. We have then all of the ingredients of an extremely explosive exchange. The relations, on all levels, between keeper and kept will be defensive and antagonistic.

One senses immediately the reasons that underlie a defensive, reactive attitude on the part of the man who is trapped, but the reasons for a similar attitude on the part of the guard calls for a little more elaboration. Since the guard controls the gate and may call on the organized violence of his and other government forces, up to the u.s. Airborne Army, it may seem odd for him to feel insecure. This is the case, however—and I speak here as objectively as is possible, I never underestimate the intelligence of the people. It is a matter of *fact* that the guard is *less* psychologically secure than the man he has trapped. He is more defensive, reactive, *hostile*, than his victim. Although he controls the greater violence, he still feels that he can never relax. He knows he is one of forty men whose function is to suppress thousands, and although he can bring into play a superior arm, any prisoner among the thousands streaming past him on normal errands could be armed with a crude but lethal knife, club, or zipgun with silencer. Add to all of this the mechanics of control: aren't the forty who control the thousands the most hated of men? How else can they maintain internal control of the prison except through fear and terror tactics?

In these California prisons the usual setup is for several riflemen to take positions in towers or on catwalks over the heads of the

Mexican extortionists or right-oriented political cliques. These brothers encouraged their following to avoid the pig by respecting his exacting commandments right down to the “yes, sir” bit. The hostile convict groups were counterpoised by means of an extremely diplomatic bluff. The whole of their ideology was predicated upon prayer and nonviolent supplication. The keepers reacted with pick handles, tear gas, infiltration, special lockaway confinement, and new laws that of course created new crimes, which in turn meant longer prison terms for some—the always expected overreaction. Power's defense reflex reacted blindly to any and all fancied or real challenge. A few of these brothers at the upper levels suffered, but taken all together, the effect upon the grass roots was in keeping with the general development of a revolutionary cadre.

I did not join the Muslims because in principle I'm absolutely opposed to prayer. My philosophical persuasion was, is, and always will be materialism, dialectical materialism; my economics, proletarian socialism; my understanding of problem-solving in general, workers'-people's war on all that presently exists. After laboring through Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao, Nkrumah and the others I was irreconcilably repelled by the gossamer slush talk, abracadabra, the sheer distortion of, or absence of, historical reality in the Muslim approach. I existed on the fringes of their group with my much smaller, selective, highly disciplined, hopefully clandestine group. Our aim was to protect and to channel the rage into revolutionary “thinking,” to superimpose upon the criminal mentality, the Muslim mentality, and the barren mentality, the explosive doctrines of “Mao-think,” people's government, self-determination.

It was at this point, after the first whisper of anti-Establishment, that the concatenation of horrors began in earnest. In '63 comrade Cleaver was instrumental in organizing a “physical

the hardest man think ten times before defending himself.

On the surface “4500” can be justified as a deterrent to violence in general. In reality, it deters only the prisoner, and as it works out in fact, it deters only the violence that is aimed at the guard. No court system could possibly handle all the fights that occur between prisoners, since these fights are actively encouraged by the guards on the safety-valve and divide-and-conquer principles. It flies in the face of “equal protection” by making the death penalty mandatory for a crime that is often dismissed with a light county jail sentence and makes the question of a jury “penalty hearing” redundant since death is mandatory. This statute, aimed at one class only, when taken into context with the indeterminate sentence, works to destroy the “first and last freedom,” the most basic right, the right to live.

The character of prison existence over these last ten years has changed so radically in flavor that the sense of fascist political reaction can no longer be hidden by the language of Establishment criminologists. The first changes, relatively small ones, came about just prior to the riot stage of the present Amerikan revolution, and as a result of Malcolm X’s Muslim-style nationalism. A sizeable percentage of the Black prison population (about forty percent of the whole) went Muslim mainly to give some meaning to their persecution. Islam was the thing. At its upper levels were some seriously concerned brothers, down through the ranks were the objects of their concern, young brothers usually fresh from the outside prison, green, extremely retarded in survival technique and the intellectual or psychological stability required of life at the barricades.

The Muslims offered a small measure of group protection from the more flagrant abuses of the pig and against the customary racist attacks leveled at Blacks from the dozens of white and

entrapped and the rest of the guards. The catwalks are attached to the inside and outside walls of the connected cellblocks in San Quentin. Gun cover over the general population of Soledad comes from outside a centrally located “window gun post” in each of the wings. The guards are generally rotated so that every one of them enjoys the opportunity to man a tower or catwalk. But the days and months that a guard has to spend on the ground are what destroy anything at all that was good, healthy, or social about him before. Fear begets fear. And we come out with two groups of schizoids, one guarding the other. The spiral extends outward and up.

The guards who think for the others do not come into close contact with the prisoner but their responses are governed by some of the same fears that are driving the lowliest of turnkeys. These older and sometimes intelligent guards are actually the initial source of the organized violence, the planned terror. Their wage depends on control “without incident.” When Sacramento is forced to wield its axe to satisfy political demands for stronger control (less killing and escape), the cuts will be aimed at the captains and wardens. The people who appoint them and the people who read newspapers don’t like to hear of stirrings and discontent from behind the walls. It implies a lack of control over the men, that the system has turned against itself when the victims of the nightmare have been made to seem, and in some cases are, a threat to its continued existence.

For the intelligent inmate, the strongest deterrent to getting involved in any sort of violence at all is the observation that a serious injury will almost certainly result in death. The hospital facilities of one of these towns are very similar to what one would expect in any depressed or ghetto section of the country. Just always a little worse. We get an aspirin for a hole in the back. They put me to work in the hospital some years ago in San Quentin.

I accepted the assignment only because it was in relatively clean surroundings. I would have plenty of time to follow my own pursuits and, being communistic by nature, I hoped to be able to change—any change would be an improvement—some of the conditions that were so damaging to the overall health of the inmate population, and in particular the Black population. The racist traditions of this “land of the free and home of the hunter” always seem to work to send a disproportionate percentage of Blacks in search of medical treatment. I set up my own clandestine medical clinic. Pain killers and suture, both sanitary, were my principal services, but any other item that I could liberate from the state was also available, from cough syrup to eye wash, and sometimes even food. The difference between my clinic and the state’s was that mine remained available at all times in the cleanest possible setting. Also everything was available in the desired amounts. Of course there was no charge for any of this. The medicines that contained narcotics were the most expensive items. When I couldn’t liberate enough of these I had to buy them with funds taken from our “people’s mutual.” The keepers objected and I eventually ended up working the graveyard shift in the psych ward. Power will never endure any challenge without an automatic reactionary response. A comrade took over the clinic.

The fear tactic reaches its finest development in the procedures governing the granting of paroles and discharges. In California courts a sentence of “what the law prescribes” means an “indeterminate” stay in the state’s prisons. “Indeterminate” loosely translates “inconclusive, indefinite.”

For what worked out to be a second-degree robbery I received a sentence of from one year to life. In other words, I may do life for the same economic offense that I would do one year. All the other sentences for various types and degrees of offenses are

in general the same: three-to-life, five-to-live, ten-to-life, on up. “Lesser” sentences can also be drawn: six months to five years, six months to ten years, six months to fourteen years. The “to-life” sentences are technically considered life terms. A state law, especially designed to affect men doing life or “to-life” terms, can be found under section 4500 of the State Penal Code. It provides “that every person serving a life sentence who assaults another with a deadly weapon or by means likely to produce great bodily injury is punishable by death. If the person assaulted is another inmate, the punishment may be death or life without possibility of parole for nine years, consecutive to the present term.” I didn’t change a word; it reads that way from the Code Book. The language of “4500” is well known to all lifers. It’s the very first statute described in the little rule book we are given upon our arrival. It’s the first “rundown” we receive from a comrade.

The obvious imbalances of this law are written right into its face. Assault directed at another inmate “could” mean death for the attacker, assault directed at a guard is “certain” death for the attacker. But several other complications, ambiguities, and hidden fear-control devices spring from this statute that affects the great majority of the state’s prison class (most of us are lifers!). Its first and deepest psychological effect is to cause a transference of hostility inward. I’ve seen the “keeper” slap a man at the food serving line, take his trays and send him back to his cell without dinner. The man that was slapped may have been old enough to be the keeper’s father. The urge to strike out at the “keeper” will almost always be repressed. In fact, most of the spontaneous fistfights between inmates occur immediately following an encounter between one of the participants of the fight and a “keeper.” I’ve seen brothers that I would have never suspected to be cowards, brothers and others of our class confined for robberies, gun battles, and murder, I’ve seen them grovelling, accepting the boot. “4500” and the indeterminate sentence make